

## MEDIA RELEASE

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# Residents to be surveyed on bushfire response

Residents in areas affected by the Black Saturday fires are being asked to contribute to a long term study on how communities deal with bushfires.

The Bushfire Cooperative Research Centre and RMIT University's Centre for Risk and Community Safety are this month conducting a survey to better understand the range of experiences of the 2009 Victorian bushfires.

The results of this survey will add to the broader work of the Bushfire CRC Research Taskforce. This Taskforce coordinated teams of researchers and fire agency staff from across Australia in the areas affected by the 7 February fires. The teams examined more than 1300 properties and recorded interviews with more than 600 residents.

Researchers are now building on this by collecting additional information from those living in the area but not present at the time of the initial interviews.

This knowledge will be shared across Australia and internationally and is assisting the Royal Commission and other organisations in developing better ways to work with communities on bushfire preparation and recovery.

Key questions to be answered by the survey include:

- How were people in different areas of the state affected by the fires?
- How was the "Prepare, Stay and Defend or Leave Early" policy understood and used in fire prone communities on February 7?
- What did people do to protect themselves and their property before and during the fires?
- Were fire warnings adequate?
- How could warning systems be improved?

Dr Richard Thornton, Research Director of the Bushfire CRC, said the scale of the research undertaken by the Taskforce is unprecedented internationally. "By completing the survey, residents will be making an important contribution to the work that is underway across Australia and in other fire prone areas of the world to improve the safety of those threatened by bushfires."

Over the next few weeks, 6000 households in fire affected areas across Victoria will receive the survey in the mail. These include residents in areas surrounding the largest fires at **Kilmore East, Murrindindi, Churchill, Beechworth, Bendigo and Horsham.**

Residents in fire affected areas who did not receive a survey in the mail but would like to participate may request a copy from Joshua Whittaker on (03) 9925 2418 or BY EMAIL [joshua.whittaker@rmit.edu.au](mailto:joshua.whittaker@rmit.edu.au).

### ***For further information contact:***

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